

By the time we got to our seats, the frenzied crowd of 8-thousand was at pitch fever, screaming obscenities I'd never heard before. My buddies and I were well beyond excited .

The villainous Race and Hennig battled the brawling deuce, Crusher and Bruiser in what was looking to be a draw. Copious blood shed, bodies tossed, the grunt of air heaving from lungs. But the roaring crowd was convulsed. Clarity was needed. We all needed a winner.



Without warning, a little old lady crawled into the ring, a metal folding chair in her iron grip. Without warning, she raised the weaponized seat above her head and charged toward the referee, smashing the brute instrument into the poor man's skull.

He crumpled to the mat, blood flooding the canvas. The crowd went insane. The two tag teams retreated to their corners, confused. The thousands of inebriated fans seethed, raining empty Grain Belt cups, bottles and disgusting refuse down on the ring.

We were giddy.
Dad just smiled.

He **knew** we were ready for a paradigm shift even as we did not. At the age of 12 certain myths must explode. Certain fictions must vanish.



Without telling us why, the Old Man had packed an old reel-to-reel tape recorder into the arena. In our hormonal youth, we'd failed to notice. The Championship Match had been determined a draw, what with the referee being injured by the angry old lady with the chair.

Dad turned to me and my buddies and asked, "Would you like to go down to the locker room and meet the Crusher." You coulda slapped us!



As we made our way down the gangway into the locker room, dad said, "I brought the tape recorder because I'm going to audition Crusher's voice for a Grain Belt beer commercial. You boys are about to meet him."

"Wow" The entire evening instantly became surreal.

As we turned into the inner sanctum of pro wrestling, the locker room, I heard the distinct sound of men and women laughing. Drawing nearer to the Ring Gods we worshipped I noticed they, who 20-minutes earlier had been sworn enemies, were sharing beers, laughing at one another's humor, all the while patting their girl friends' behinds.

I'm sure my jaw dropped. The disillusionment in my friends' eyes was matched only by the anguish in mine.

At some point we reached the innermost sanctuary where The Crusher, The Bruiser, Handsome Harley Race and Larry "Pretty Boy" Hennig were all seated round, their Grain Belts half-drained, a series of empties lining-up, their women draped like snakeskin.

My dad introduced himself and pointed vaguely in our direction. "This is my boy and his buddies. They're big fans."

"Look at those 3," the Crusher said. "Did you like that little old lady who bashed the ref with the chair," he asked.

"Yeah...cool, Mr. Crusher," we responded, voices cracking.

"Well boys, I want you to meet her." Turning to his scantily clad lady friend, The Crusher said, "Traci, put on that wig and that trench coat and show these boys how to handle a metal folding chair."

Traci did so. Innocence shattered, we suddenly looked forward to an uncertain but intriguing future.